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NOVEMBER 12, 2003

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TURNING KIDS INTO CRIMINALS

Roseville Democrat says that M.I.P. bill could jail kids for drinking

LANSING- State Sen. Michael Switalski (D-Roseville) spoke out against a Senate Bill that passed today that could modify the definition of a minor in possession to include having alcohol in the body and could result in jail time for repeat offenders. Possession is currently defined as having control of or actually having a substance such as alcohol on a person when a police officer has reasonable cause to search a person.

“The current system appears to be working as M.I.P. convictions have decreased over the last couple of years,” said Sen. Switalski. “Many of my young constituents go to Canada to drink legally and then come home to Michigan with a designated driver. The Michigan Court of Appeals has ruled that this is not a crime. Yet the legislature is being asked to manipulate the meaning of possession, distort our laws and put kids in jail for something that, if we are honest, many of ourselves have engaged in at one time or another.”

SB 637 would provide for a fine of up to \$100 for a first offense with a second offense leading up to 30 days in jail and a \$200 fine. A subsequent conviction could result in a \$500 fine and up to 93 days in jail. A first time offender who pleads guilty could have charges dismissed if they fulfill the conditions of probation, which could include community service and substance abuse counseling.

“With this legislation we are preparing to brand our children as criminals, categorize them as substance abusers, compel them to undergo therapy, put them on probation for up to a year, charge them thousands of dollars for these privileges, scar them with a criminal record that may limit their aspirations for the rest of their lives and ultimately put them in jail.”

“If we are saying that the mere presence of trace amounts of alcohol in a minor’s system is criminal possession, consider the implications. If that is possession, then minors who ingest such things as mouthwash, cough syrup and rum raisin ice cream are criminals. Our jails are already overcrowded. Is this really how we want our kids treated and our jails run?”

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